This article originally appeared in
Conversations Journal:
A Forum For Authentic Transformation
Spring/Summer 2014, Issue 12.1: Wisdom & Aging

Additional articles, back issues and subscriptions are available on our website at
www.conversationsjournal.com

We invite you to join the conversation on our Facebook page
www.facebook.com/conversationsjournal

or via our Twitter feed @conversationsjl

CUSTOMER SERVICE/SUBSCRIBER INQUIRIES:
CONVERSATIONS
PO BOX 292378
KETTERING, OH 45429
800-607-4410
SERVICE@CONVERSATIONSJOURNAL.COM

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS:
CONVERSATIONS
MCCARTY BUILDING
2055 MOUNT PARAN ROAD
ATLANTA, GA 30327
800-607-4410
CONVERSATIONS@RICHMONT.EDU
In keeping with the idea of the soul as a unique representation of unity and diversity, the format of Conversations includes five continuing themes, each representing an enduring aspect of the soul—thought, emotion, behavior, relationship, and intention.

**Transformational Theology**
Forming the Soul

**Honesty**
About the Journey
Dark Nights and Bright Mornings

**Life Together**
Friendship and Direction

**Wisdom, Silence, and Learning How to Die**
By Tara M. Owens in Conversation with Eugene Peterson

**Gathering Wisdom**
The Golden Fruit of Later Years
By Emilie Griffin

**Older & Wiser**
Seven Attitudes for Sustaining Love and Relationship
By Doug Rosenau

**Well Seasoned**
How Spiritual Companioning Prepares Us for Our Death
By Lane Arnold

**Living Like We’re Dying: Reflections and Exercises for Wise Aging**
By Valerie Hess

---

**Conversations**
Volume 12.1

---

**Front Page**
The Blessing of the Bitter
By Tara M. Owens

**Join the Conversation**
Journey into Joy
Celebrating the Wisdom of Dallas Willard
By Trevor Hudson
features

62
AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE
The Journey from Innocence to Character
BY LACY FINN BORGO

65
POETRY
II
BY WENDELL BERRY

66
O TASTE AND SEE
Meditations on Shoshannah Brombacher’s Yaakov Blessing Ephrayim and Menasheh
BY MARILYN MCENTYRE

82
Conversations Guide
BY ROBERT RIFE

INTENTIONALITY OF THE HEART
WILLING TO CHANGE

50
THE CRISIS OF MENTORSHIP
WHAT YOUNG LEADERS DESPERATELY NEED FROM THOSE WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE
BY KURT WILLEMS

CLASSICAL SPIRITUAL EXERCISES
HABITS THAT TRANSFORM

70
A SEASON OF MYSTERY
SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE SECOND HALF OF LIFE
BY PAULA HUSTON

56
AGING & MATURING
A PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT TOWARD TELEIOS
BY JULIE A. GORMAN

76
LISTEN TO MY LIFE
THE WISDOM OF RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO GOD IN MY STORY
BY SHARON SWING

FOR FRESH, UP-TO-DATE CONTENT INCLUDING ARTICLES, AUTHOR INTERVIEWS, AND MORE, VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT CONVERSATIONSJOURNAL.COM.
In *Journey Into Joy*, Trevor Hudson is opening his life to us and reveals in so doing that it is much more common to experience heart-change through an encounter with a radical life than a radical idea. The backdrop for his existential crisis was Dallas Willard’s claim that God is the most joyous entity in the universe. For Hudson this was a red flag. How could a God of love and righteousness be joyous in the face of the heinous inequality, misdeeds, and human tragedy of his apartheid-ridden South Africa? He found himself in a theological pickle.

For Hudson this was a red flag. How could a God of love and righteousness be joyous in the face of the heinous inequality, misdeeds, and human tragedy of his apartheid-ridden South Africa? He found himself in a theological pickle.

A wonderful spiritual friendship with a joy-filled servant of Christ helped one man retool his understanding of God and find new joy in his journey with that God.

1. Has anyone ever made a statement about some aspect of God with which you took issue? What did you feel at the time? What actions did you take to explore the discomfort within you?
2. Do you have a person in your life who exemplifies some aspect of God you struggle to understand? How is your relationship with that person helping you to change your thinking in this matter?
3. In what ways does our theology (what we think about God) impact our spirituality (what we do with that knowledge)? Do you think it’s possible to enjoy a healthy, growing relationship with God with an inadequate theology?
4. Pray every day this week that God might reveal to you weak spots in your own image of God. Ask him to guide you to someone who exemplifies clarity in those weak spots and can walk with you into greater wholeness and understanding.

Older & Wiser

**DOUG ROSENAU**

A tip of the hat to Doug Rosenau for an unflinching foray into one of Christianity’s least discussed topics: sexual intimacy. Here, he explores how maturity can function as catalyst for sustaining passionate sexual exploration well into our senior years.

In keeping with our other articulate writers on the subject, Rosenau adds his voice to the mounting chorus of those who loudly proclaim that age does not guarantee wisdom. Rosenau believes that, although “age doesn’t always bring with it maturity,” it can actually enhance sexual intimacy with our partner.

Seven concepts frame his thinking on the subject of sex and aging. Maturity accepts and even welcomes our imperfections. We are not threatened by uncertainties or ambiguity but learn to feel at ease in complexity and even disorder. Second, says Rosenau, “Maturity postpones immediate pleasure for long-term gain.” The richest rewards are gained over time. As we mature, we become

It is much more common to experience heart-change through an encounter with a radical life than a radical idea.
more comfortable with our limitations and exchange being sexy for being sensual. Our maturity can nurture the attitude that “success is not a destination but an excursion,” which in turn guides us toward ever-deeper connection with our partner and ourselves. Finally, he concludes that cultivating a pervasive gratitude makes us instantly more happy and, frankly, more attractive!

1. Do you agree with Rosenau’s assumption that age doesn’t always bring with it maturity? How do you see yourself maturing as you age? Where are your “weak spots” that require attention? How do those places contribute or steal from sexual intimacy?
2. Are you and your partner becoming comfortable with your “imperfections”? Your “limitations”? If not, are there ways for you to begin the process of loving acceptance of those?
3. How has sexual intimacy changed for you and your partner over the years? Does your deepening friendship enhance that intimacy? How?
4. How are you growing in gratitude? Look for the ways that gratitude contributes to sexual enjoyment and intimacy.

In this article, Dr. Crabb culls from his years of study and practice as a psychologist and as a disciple of Christ to say basically this: at any age, our best self emerges from the chrysalis of Christ-in-me and the degree to which we embrace that reality. “How I live my remaining years will not be determined by what happens to me but rather by my deepening awareness of what the gospel of Christ is stirring within me,” he declares boldly.

In so doing, he investigates what choices need to be made in his waning years. Will they become a tightening noose around his neck, choking the life out of him? Or, will they provide the means by which he and others experience God’s ever-expanding grace?

Dr. Crabb shares three crucial ways he continues to discover necessary for soulful living as we grow older. First, age does not guarantee wisdom. It only provides the opportunity to gain it. A dispassionate and grace-filled objectivity doesn’t necessarily mean “acedia” or apathy. Second, he insists that doubts never outpace or foil God’s deepening work in the soul. He states, “I want to walk through the doorway of doubt to discover... living truth.” Finally, wherever we may be in the long, often-dark road toward the twilight of our days, we need never fear that God will not envelop us in the warming embrace of wise and caring community.

1. Crabb suggests that the boredom he experiences may actually be creating new opportunities for self-discovery. As you grow older, do you see an “acedia” or boredom beginning to set in? How are you seeking to understand it? Are there others who can help you to see it as the invitation it is to a deeper living in grace?
2. Do you sometimes experience doubts, even as an aging saint? What practices might you invoke to help you embrace those doubts and, in so doing, “plow the soil in which the seeds of wisdom grow”?
3. In what ways can you strive to grow into the kind of older person who can nourish and strengthen others? Are you actively looking for such relationships?
4. A Prayer:
   “Create in me an ever-yearning heart, an ever-learning mind, and an ever-leaning trust, O God, to the blessing of others and to the glory of God. Amen.”
Third, the ideal mentor is also a lifelong learner. Fourth, says Willems, when “equality of choice is lacking, the mentor becomes a mere dispenser of information rather than a means towards united transformation.” He is looking for some genuine give and take, the kind experienced in life’s best and most lasting relationships. Fifth, to be a mentor one must believe he or she has something to offer another.

Kurt’s deeply longing heart is plainly visible here. He summarizes by saying, “If I were to boil it all down, the one thing that saw me through one of the darkest moments of my twenties was mentorship.”

1. Can you recall a particularly challenging time in your life when a mentor’s presence was helpful? How did that relationship help you adjust to the circumstances, and even overcome them?
2. Have you had an unpleasant experience with a mentor? How did you find your way to freedom and emotional health again afterwards?
3. Do you presently enjoy the blessing of a mentoring relationship in your life? How has that relationship benefited you personally? Professionally?
4. Do you sense a call to become a mentor to someone else? If so, whom? Is your mentor assisting you in finding and developing that relationship?

“How I live my remaining years will not be determined by what happens to me but rather by my deepening awareness of what the gospel of Christ is stirring within me.”

The abiding myths, common to all cultures, of staying on top of my game and my image, proffers the lie that life will be better with more of this or that. Either myth denies us the opportunity to fully embrace our own selves in God’s nonfortuitous grace. It is the ubiquitous myth of the fountain of youth from which we may drink and live forever, eternally broken children forever denied the everlasting joys of the resurrected life.

In old age, Huston insists, we will be faced with challenges so great that only the combined wisdom of our years can offer us sufficient foundation upon which to continue building our lives. We must not be deceived into believing that chronos equals kairos, that age promises wisdom. We must choose to thrive, not just survive, old age.

Huston challenges us to claim our best, most admirable life, despite the temptations of the “enviable” one. Moreover, she invites us to consider the broader eschatological context for our lives: “Through Christ... we have been freed from the grim quest to satisfy every desire.”

Paula gives a number of anti-aging practices designed to help us all grab hold of the fullest Jesus-life available to us in our waning years. She ends with a most encouraging observation: “One of the most beautiful teachings of Christianity... is the assurance that we are never alone on this difficult earthly journey.” Thanks be to God!

1. On what side of “the hill” do you perceive yourself to be? Do you feel more or less “alive” now than you did twenty years ago? If so, how? If not, why do you think this is?
2. Do you sometimes catch yourself succumbing to cultural temptations toward bettering your game or your image? Can you think of ways to counteract such temptations?
3. How can you begin to live your life more “eschatologically”, that is, in preparation for meeting God face to face? How could such an attitude assist you in your day-to-day struggles?
4. Wherever you are in your chronological journey, purpose to live more kairotic (Spirit-fed) lives by means of the disciplines Ms. Huston offers here.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR
Robert Rife is was born in Calgary, Alberta, but presently serves as minister of worship & music at Yakima Covenant Church in Yakima, Washington. He is a singer-songwriter (his CD, “Be That As It May” is available on iTunes), liturgist, speaker, poet, and writer. He is a graduate from Spring Arbor University with an M.A. in spiritual formation and leadership. He is dedicated to discovering those places where life, liturgy, theology, and the arts intersect with and promote spiritual formation.

Nothing really prepares us for the explosive realities of life on the downside of life’s steep mountain. Old age, whether a good or bad experience, is always shrouded in mystery and the unknown.

We must not be deceived into believing that chronos equals kairos, that age promises wisdom. We must choose to thrive, not just survive, old age.

CONVERSATIONSJOURNAL.COM